

X. *Explication of an inedited Coin, with two Legends, in different Languages, on the Reverse. In a Letter to Mathew Maty, M. D. Sec. R. S. from the Rev. John Swinton, B. D. F. R. S. Custos Archivorum of the University of Oxford, Member of the Academy degli Apatisti at Florence, and of the Etruscan Academy of Cortona in Tuscany.*

GOOD SIR,

Read Feb. 7, 1771. **T**HE coin I shall here attempt to

explain on one side (See TAB. III. n. 1.) presents to our view the head of Jupiter, and on the other the prow of a ship, which indicates the place wherein it was struck to have been a maritime town. Above the prow of the ship, we see two characters, that are either Punic (1) or Phœnician. I say, either Punic or Phœnician, because it may not perhaps be so easy to determine whether that town was occupied by the

(1) From the present state of the Kabyles we may infer, that the ancient Africans, or Indigenæ, their progenitors, must have been a very rude uncivilized people, at the first arrival of the Carthaginians amongst them. It is therefore utterly improbable, that they ever used any alphabetical characters, before the Phœnician letters were introduced into their country by the Carthaginians; or that any other characters, peculiar to themselves, and different from the Punic, ever afterwards prevailed amongst them. I cannot therefore but think, that those learned men who suppose the reality of such characters are egregiously mistaken, as they can have nothing to advance in support of such an opinion. Shaw, *Travels*, &c. p. 288, 289, Oxford, 1738. Peller. *Suppl. quatr. & dern.* p. 55. A Paris, 1767.

Cartha-

Carthaginians, or the Phœnicians, and the Romans, when the piece first appeared. Besides the two above-mentioned characters, there is a monogram, formed of the three Latin letters V, A, B, very indifferently preserved, in the exergue, with which the Punic or Phœnician elements perfectly correspond. For the second of those elements is manifestly the most common Punic or Phœnician form of *Beth*, and I have many years since proved the first (2) to be a form of the Phœnician and Samaritan *Vau*; and (3) observed, that though it sometimes answers to V consonant, it is likewise not seldom taken for *Beth*, or B. Nor is this to be wondered at, as those two letters so nearly in power approach one another. The middle element of the monogram, A, has nothing equivalent to it in the Punic or Phœnician inscription; that vowel, in conformity to the genius of the oriental orthography, between the two consonants, being there suppressed. But the two Punic or Phœnician characters, and the Latin monogram, clearly enough demonstrate the name of the town where the piece was struck. The monogram seems to be preceded by a sort of date in the exergue, which resembles the characters **LCXI**; but, as these characters are ill preserved and indistinct, I believe the powers of them will not be so easily ascertained.

From what has been here laid down, the learned will easily admit the medal in question to have been struck at Vabar, a maritime city of Mauritania Cæsariensis, after that place had been ceded to the Romans, and was inhabited by them, and either the Carthaginians or the Phœnicians. Vabars i mention-

(2) *De Num. quibusd. Sam. et Phœn. &c. Dissert.* p. 73, 74. Oxon. 1750. (3) *Ibid.* p. 74.

ed by (4) Ptolemy, but in his days seems to have been a place of no considerable note. It, however, probably made a greater figure, when inhabited either by the Carthaginians, or the Phœnicians, and the Romans; for that it was occupied by two at least of those nations, when the medal before me first appeared, the legends on the reverse, though somewhat imperfect, render sufficiently clear. That the Carthaginians were possessed of this city in ancient times, is consonant to the faith of history; since they were masters of all that part of Africa extending from the pillars of Hercules, or streights of Gibraltar, to the greater Syrtis, for a considerable period of time, as we learn from (5) Polybius. And that the Phœnicians were masters of it in early times, is equally probable. For that they occupied the sea-coast of Mauritania, from at least the generation immediately preceding Homer to the time it fell into the hands of the Romans, we are informed by Strabo (6). It cannot therefore be easily determined, as already observed, whether the piece in question was struck by the Phœnicians or the Carthaginians. It must, however, be attributed to the town of Vabar, when inhabited by either the Carthaginians or the Phœnicians, not improbably the latter, and the Romans; the two legends on the reverse, as well as the perfect agreement between them, rendering this incontestably clear.

That the piece I am considering was either of a Punic or an Africo-Phœnician origin, may be deemed probable from hence, that it exhibits a Latin legend

(4) Ptol. *Geogr.* Lib. IV. c. ii.

(5) Polyb. *Megalopolit. Historiar.* Lib. iii. p. 266, 267. Amstelodami, 1670.

(6) Strab. *Geogr.* Lib. iii. p. 150, 151. Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1620.

on the reverse, as do several other Punic or Africo-Phœnician coins. This appears from some of the medals of the elder Juba, one of Achola, and another of Leptis, now in my small collection; to omit other similar instances, that might, with great facility, be produced: whereas, unless I am greatly deceived, none of the Asiatico-Phœnician coins have ever yet presented to our view any Latin characters. This is an additional proof in support of what has been here advanced; and seems farther to evince, that my medal must be assigned to the town of Vabar, and was struck there, when that place was occupied by either the Carthaginians or the African Phœnicians, and the Romans; though the time of that operation cannot, with any tolerable precision, be ascertained.

I shall only beg leave to add, that though Vabar was a place of no great note in the days of Ptolemy, it seems to have been a town of some consideration in the earlier times, as (7) Dr. Shaw saw some ancient ruins on the spot where it formerly stood; that a coin of this ancient city has never yet, I believe, been communicated to the learned world; that the medal before me, which at present has a place in my small cabinet, is one of those very few Punic or Phœnician coins that are adorned with a Latin legend, and consequently merits the particular attention both of the curious and the learned; and that I am, with the highest regard,

S I R, Your much obliged  
and most obedient humble servant,

Christ-Church, Oxon.  
Sept. 28, 1770.

John Swinton.

(7) Shaw, ubi sup. p. 89. Oxford, 1738.